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COHEN AND FILIPCZAK'S A NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: *WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S NOT*[1]

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In reviewing a book published 21 years ago about a research project completed 26 years ago, a short question might be asked: "Why?" I hope this review not only will address this question but will also raise additional queries generated by reading this reissued book.

Harold Cohen, a graduate of the Chicago Institute of Design, was interested in providing environmental solutions to the problems encountered by special education students. As Buckminster Fuller said in the foreword (p. xiv), "Harold Cohen, trying to reform environment instead of trying to reform man, saw that he might be able to develop school apparatus and procedures to help the student learn how to teach himself." To this end, Cohen, with his graduate student Filipczak, created an experimental academic and social learning environment within the federal penal system at the National Training School (NTS) for Boys in Washington, D.C. The main goal of the CASE II-MODEL (*C*ontingencies *A*pplicable to *S*pecial *E*ducation—*M*otivationally *O*riented *D*esigns for an *E*cology of *L*earning) project was "to develop procedures to establish and maintain educational behaviors in a penal setting" (p. 5). Cohen was "not concerned merely with behavior itself but with a functional analysis of the ecology that maintained the behavior" (p. xx). This approach was most uncommon in the prison lore of 1966.

Using current criteria, the CASE II-MODEL project would be considered both successful and a very special undertaking because releasees committed fewer offenses and remained arrest-free for a longer period of time (2 years) than other federal juvenile releasees, and because of some unique features not available to behavior analysts working today in state, federal, and/or local closed penal institutions. These features include (a) a comprehensive contingency management system that not only functioned to change the behavior of the juveniles but also extended to the security staff, who received extra pay for attending reinforcement-training seminars and could propose new programs they had designed. Such contingencies helped ensure consistently cooperative staff participation. (b) An ongoing program budget of $1,000 per month provided ample opportunity to individualize activities and reinforcers. (c) A four-story building was completely renovated so that each floor "housed a semi-autonomous program function" (p. 41). The design included 30 individual sleeping rooms, one dormitory-type sleeping area, and a communal shower room with private shower stalls and storage area on the ground floor; the dining room, kitchen, library, reinforcer store, and research staff offices were located on the first floor; educational activities were conducted on the second floor; and vocational training activity areas (electronics, drafting, photography, carpentry, plumbing), teachers' offices, and counseling spaces were located on the third floor.

These features, the funding available, the longevity of the project, and the fact that Cohen and Filipczak had both responsibility and authority for the program are not commonly available to researchers in correctional settings.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, it appeared that Skinner had predicted accurately when he said that Cohen and Filipczak's project might "well take its place as a landmark in penal reform" (Skinner,

[1] Review of: Cohen, H. L., & Filipczak, J. (1989). *A new learning environment.* Boston, MA: Authors Cooperative, Inc. (Original work published 1971)

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1971/1989, p. xviii). The CASE II-MODEL with its contingency management delivery system was cited in 90% of correctional behavioral research in those decades. Why has the CASE II-MODEL remained a demonstration project (i.e., no replication in other settings, no transfer to the natural environment)? The current conditions in juvenile corrections certainly warrant our attention: There are over 500,000 children and adolescents in juvenile and adult prisons in the U.S. (Farrow, 1984). Of these children (ages 11–18 years), approximately 42% have completed Grades 7 or 8 and 3% have finished high school (Jamieson & Flanagan, 1989). More prisons are being built with recommendations for longer terms. Given these data we might also ask, "Why have these procedures not been consistently adopted and implemented even in *institutional* settings?" Lane and Burchard (1983) may have answered this question when they pointed out that very restrictive environments lower the probability that rehabilitative behavior change will occur and be maintained.

But is this putting the cart before the horse? If there is no focus on developing new technology and/or modifying existing technology to change delinquent behavior in *any* setting, *and* if there is no ongoing research to determine the most appropriate means of transferring this technology to the natural environment, what is the likelihood that any long-term behavior change will occur, regardless of the setting?

A New Learning Environment addressed these issues 26 years ago. First, the authors demonstrated the effect that a contingency-oriented environment can have on behavior acquisition. The CASE program, by prompting self-management and reinforcing problem-solving and decision-making behavior, generated behavioral repertoires suited to conditions in the free world. Second, although transition programming was not a goal for the CASE II-MODEL, part of the project included "leaves" for which students were eligible after a 4-month residency in the CASE environment.

The leave policy incorporated a fading procedure in which students moved from staff-escorted shopping trips (up to 4 hr) to 10-hr escorted leaves with parents or guardians on Saturday or Sunday to 48- to 72-hr unescorted leaves. These excursions away from the highly structured learning setting could be seen as a precursor of, or furnishing a basis for, what today's literature calls transitional programming.

Making use of the technology advanced in *A New Learning Environment* and incorporating into this model community programs containing training options for parents or guardians of delinquents might prove to be a fruitful path for applied behavior analysts interested in the field of delinquency. Although such a path might be strewn with challenges, ranging from agencies that might resist the technology and try to perpetuate the status quo (Glenn, 1985) to convincing applied behavior analysts that correctional research *can* be fruitful, Cohen and Filipczak pioneered this frontier, standing at least partially on the shoulders of Ayllon and Azrin (1968). Anyone ready to step up and be next?

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